







VOL. 45 NO. 3, June 2023

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On the cover

WAPA linemen Richard Mortensen, Alex Robles, Horacio Adriano and Brian Heisler perform maintenance in Lake Mead National Recreation Area on 230-kV line insulators damaged by lightning during a summer monsoon storm. Photo by David Katich using UAS.



Droning on: Unmanned aerial systems training takes flight

By Stephen J. Collier
Photos by Richard Westra

ore than 40 of WAPA's frontline workforce graduated Feb. 24 from the organization's first formalized unmanned aerial systems training program.

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The two-day training, overseen by WAPA's Aviation office, is the culmination of more than six years of work to bring the UAS aircraft, commonly known as drones, into the organization's mission of maintaining transmission lines throughout the western U.S. The program's intent varies, but as WAPA's Aviation Manager **Richard Westra** described, the goal has always been to safely minimize the time linemen and work crews need to scale transmission poles.

"This idea for drones came from listening to our workforce," Westra said. "We wanted to limit linemen from having to climb so much, as well as providing our workforce with a strong tool they could use to keep them out of high-risk environments. So, we believed drones could be the answer to that."

During the training at WAPA's Electric Power Training Center in Lakewood, Colorado, employees focused on classroom education and flight training. During day one, attendees learned about Federal Aviation Administration guidelines governing UAS aircraft, the components of the handheld systems and how they integrate into WAPA operations.

On day two, WAPA staff were introduced to flight training, piloting the UAS aircraft around the EPTC. After training, they received certification to safely pilot UAS aircraft to perform transmission line inspections and maintenance.

The graduation featured transmission linemen, electricians, and protection and communications technicians representing each of WAPA's regional offices.

A vision takes flight

In 2016, Westra, one of WAPA's senior helicopter pilots, thought drones could solve problems facing the organization. The Aviation office procured WAPA's first drone with the goal of limiting the amount of time linemen spend climbing up and down power poles. His team first tested the new UAS in the Desert Southwest region.

"After finding initial success in that drone, we then procured two more," Westra said. "For the next two to three years, we proved the concept of UAS aircraft being used in the field."

During the concept phase, Westra, now joined by a cadre of linemen who shared his vision, needed to search out a supplier. That's when Skydio, a California-based manufacturer, came into view.

"We were looking around for a drone that could meet our unique needs, but also wanted to find a U.S.based manufacturer at the same time," Westra said. "Our needs included simplicity, ruggedness and reliability."

Evaluating the vendor's product line, Westra and his team determined the drones could contribute to WAPA's core mission of transmission line maintenance. WAPA would become that company's first U.S. government client.

Since then, with UAS aircraft fully integrated into WAPA's mission, linemen and technicians have seen a decrease in safety-related issues and time spent on work orders. This has resulted in cost savings for WAPA and its more than 700 customers throughout the West.

Westra said that, traditionally, a single call to inspect a line or transmission pole could cost thousands of dollars just for an inspection, let alone any significant repairs. Instead of the hours it takes to do inspections with linemen or technicians climbing poles, UAS aircraft can perform the same task in minutes.

"The hours and hours of average calls are now cut down, at least in half," Westra said. "This means savings to both WAPA's budget, and our own. The program has also reduced exposure and health risk to our workforce, has increased preventative maintenance to our transmission lines and reduced costs, like fuel for our helicopter fleet due to reduced flight requirements with traditional aviation."

"The drone program has given us a unique ability to provide a higher level of detailed inspection, allowing WAPA another tool to ensure the reliability of transmission lines," he added.

Making a UAS operator

Unlike buying a drone and flying it at the park half an hour later, WAPA has adopted a formalized process

ensuring proper training and adherence to regulations.

Westra and his team identified four primary steps linemen or technicians need to complete to become a WAPA UAS operator.

First, employees must engage their supervisors to show interest in the program.

Next, Westra said they must seek FAA certification by earning their Part 107 certified drone license. Those who fly drones recreationally don't require licensing from the FAA, but federal licensing is required to use drones commercially. The certification costs \$250. Westra said the Aviation office used to pay for it, but because WAPA has embraced the program, the regions now assume employee certification costs.

With 107 licensing completed, employees must go to their supervisor and request funding to order a drone. The Aviation office maintains the specifications the drones need, including software to make them more effective for WAPA requirements and technology systems.

"Once that's done," Westra said, "the drone is then registered and delivered, waiting to be fielded."

With the drone in hand and WAPA employee licensed, it's time to get WAPA-certified. Supervised by an Aviation representative, the trainee pilots an initial drone flight. Upon successful completion, the employee becomes a WAPA UAS operator.

"Because our program has focused on quality since day one, we are now seen as a benchmark for how everyone else in the Department of Energy is rated," Westra said. "What makes me feel the best is that we have the tools and funds to get these crews to a level they can perform to the extent they do every day."

Going forward, Westra said the UAS workshop will act as both initial certification and refresher course, saving time and money for regional offices.

Changing the culture

As WAPA's UAS program continued to mature, one of the barriers Westra reflected on wasn't flight regulations or technical know-how, but the organization's culture.



"Linemen as a trade craft tend to be very independent," Westra said. "They believe they are the best at what they do, and sometimes, this can lead to pushback from adopting new ways of doing business."

Upper Great Plains Lineman **Paul Inman**, one of the original three field staff to embrace UAS technology, agreed with Westra's sentiment.

"I remember the first I even heard about drones in WAPA was while Rich was flying me out to a location in South Dakota," Inman recalled. "I was really interested, but at the time, leadership was concerned about the lack of resources and if there was even a need for it. Rich told me, 'Go get your schooling done, and Aviation will send you a drone."

At first, "Paul's toy," as the drone became affectionately known, was comical to some staff. As time went on, requests began to make their way to Inman. First came requests to inspect lines in hard-to-reach canyons. Then came requests to aerially survey damaged lines from large storms and corn crops that WAPA Maintenance staff had driven over to repair transmission lines – ensuring documentation for farmer restitution.

But the true moment of the drone's capability came on March 14, 2019, when the Spencer Dam project, located along Nebraska's Niobrara River, failed and collapsed. This monumental dam failure wreaked havoc downstream, taking out power lines crossing the river. Immediately, WAPA needed a detailed analysis of

the area to get power turned back on in surrounding communities.

"Once the river washed the dam out, we had issues with finding a new place to put in the power lines," said Inman, a 20-year lineman with WAPA. "Management asked me to bring the drone out to do a survey of the damage, providing Engineering, Environment and other offices with documentation of the situation. After that, there was no turning back. Management briefed later that if WAPA personnel needed drone support, contact Paul."

As management continued to embrace the new technology over time, Westra said the organization's frontline workforce also saw the value.

"The [UAS] program had a commonality that brought the teams together, and now people believe they are making a difference through the technology," Westra said. "This brings a unique culture into WAPA that is a secondary effect of us adopting this new way of doing business."

WAPA's frontline workers had engaged in continuous process improvement and identified best practices for UAS operations.

"Our operators have now used the UAS aircraft to assess road conditions not visible from their work vehicles, take detailed images of component serial numbers and identified wornout hardware," Westra said. "This has really allowed us to be much more active in keeping both our lights on and the wires where they need to be, versus reacting when lines fall from the poles and responding to them."

An eye on the future

Westra said the UAS program continues to evolve at WAPA, especially as more employees get licensed and certified and the technologies advance.

"We continue to have meetings with stakeholders and [the vendor] on what we can do to be responsive to our core mission of transmission maintenance," Westra said. "The capabilities on the horizon are very interesting."

Some of those capabilities include infrared cameras, which could provide WAPA a unique capability to identify problem areas with transmission lines even faster, including line overloads that generate abnormal heat signatures. Westra also envisioned pre-positioned UAS along transmission lines, allowing linemen to tap into drones anywhere along WAPA's 17,000 circuit miles of line.

Even with future possibilities presenting themselves, Westra stressed the core mission of the UAS program remains critical: minimize the risk to WAPA's workforce safety through comprehensive training and certification.

"This third level of oversight with our drones, married with linemen conducting visual inspections and helicopters overhead, has given us an opportunity to do our jobs better and more cost efficient," Westra said. "Our workforce has adapted well to drones, and the professional work they do shows through."

Note: The author is a public affairs specialist.



Power Forward 2030

How our people power WAPA forward

By Leah Shapiro

few months after the publication of its strategic plan, *Power* Forward 2030, WAPA is kicking off

a "How I Power WAPA Forward" campaign, featuring both written and video vignettes of employees sharing how they contribute to WAPA's mission and strategy.



"WAPA's employees help turn *Power Forward 2030* from a written plan into on-the-ground action and real results," Chief Strategy Officer **Kerry Whitford** explained. "We are eager for employees to identify and share how their work connects to WAPA's strategic goals."

Administrator LeBeau launches video campaign

Administrator and CEO **Tracey A. LeBeau** kicked off the video campaign with the release of her own "How I Power WAPA Forward" video. In it she shares, "I want to get us thinking about how we will all participate in ... *Power Forward*

2030. Each of you plays a critical role in powering WAPA forward through your contributions and commitment to the communities we serve."

LeBeau also shares how she powers WAPA forward by giving employees the resources they need to thrive, collaborating with our customers to solve shared problems, and partnering to ensure grid reliability to achieve a resilient energy future through 2030 and beyond.

To hear more about how LeBeau powers WAPA forward and learn more about the "How I Power WAPA Forward" video campaign, check out the May 30 "Powering WAPA forward" story on the *my*WAPA homepage.



Power Forward Perspectives



How I Power WAPA forward

As part of the campaign, the *Closed Circuit* will also feature an employee sharing how they power WAPA forward.

"Hi, I'm **Arun Sethi**. I'm Sierra Nevada's vice president of Power Marketing. I work in Folsom, California, and I power WAPA forward by ... helping WAPA prepare for and adapt to the changing energy landscape and by ensuring our rates reflect the lowest costs possible. I work with my team to ensure we are aligned to provide great customer service, and I listen to our customers to make sure we understand their needs and challenges.

Electricity markets are expanding in the West, and I feel it's my responsibility to keep an eye to the future to make sure WAPA is positioned to continue delivering on its critical mission."

Note: The author is a management and program analyst.



Imbalance Market

Photos by Alex Stephens

t midnight on April 5,
WAPA went live in the
California Independent
System Operator's
Western Energy
Imbalance Market.
Through this milestone,
Desert Southwest

and the Western Area Lower Colorado Balancing Authority began financially binding participation in the market. Through multiple training sessions and a change management program specifically designed for WEIM, WAPA worked hard to prepare to enter this market.

With the help of consultant Utilicast and the CAISO, WAPA derived and executed a detailed plan for cutover. The plan identified staff who needed to be in DSW's Operations Control Room working the Merchant real-time desk and individuals to have on the phone and on call.

The cutover plan allowed for WAPA to start small with base schedules submitted and reviewed in advance and with conservative bidding. DSW would make Energy Transfer System Resources available gradually to begin operations on a small scale and ensure things worked properly before participating more fully in the market.

Lingo lesson: Energy Transfer System Resources, or ETSRs, are energy resources that can be transferred between WEIM participants, allowing the market to optimize the energy mix. They are subject to tracking, tagging and settlement.

We're doing it live

On April 4, CAISO opened a teleconferencing bridge at 9 p.m. for all new WEIM entrants. That way, as problems arose, the new participants would have CAISO staff available to help troubleshoot. Cutover began at 12 a.m. on April 5.

"In dispatch, lots of folks were really nervous. We weren't sure if the limitation to the Energy Transfer System Resources would take, and we needed to open the ETSRs up slowly," said Power System Dispatcher **Stacy Russ**.

When grid operators tried to gradually make system resources available to the market, dispatches to Hoover Dam fluctuated wildly.

"While we were able to cut over, we weren't able to open the ETSRs right away, and Hoover had to be manually dispatched to meet the Dispatch Operating Targets for almost a week," Russ said.

During the first week of market operations, WAPA experienced bumps in the road, but WAPA's dedicated staff worked tirelessly to smooth them out. After the fact, DSW staff reviewed

The realities of entering a new market include:

- The bulk of the organization will be in learning-mode.
- There will be mistakes.
 - Some may be individual, while others may be multi-party.
 - Some may cost money; some may inadvertently benefit you.
- All these things are normal.
- There will be lessons learned.
- There will be things not previously thought about.

WAPA staff have seen or are experiencing all the above.

daily market operations to address and resolve issues.

"The first week of 'go-live' was a challenge and a learning experience, but the change to EIM also helped us identify long-standing issues and better understand our load," Russ commented. "We are still grappling with issues and learning as we go."

According to Supervisory Energy Management and Marketing Specialist **John Paulsen**, both CAISO and Utilicast said that for a balancing authority as complicated as WALC, it was amazing the cutover and continuing transition has gone so smoothly.

"This is a true testament to the dedication and hard work of our WAPA staff and our relationships with our customers and neighboring utilities," Paulsen said.

Connecting for success

This important transition marks the culmination of nearly four years of work to prepare and integrate systems and lay foundations that resulted in successful implementation. DSW expects the move into the real-time market – where the lowest-cost energy from a wide range of generating entities is sold at five-minute intervals to accommodate for temporary shortfalls – to open opportunities for cost savings.

"A market participation benefit analysis performed by [Energy & Environmental Economics, Inc.] and a cost study performed by Utilicast rendered an estimated annual net benefit of \$291,000 for WAPA and WALC customers participating in WEIM," said Paulsen. "After several weeks of participation, we are experiencing opportunities we didn't expect."

"It is too soon to gauge the magnitude of these opportunities or if they are merely seasonal, but we have reason to be optimistic about our potential benefits going forward," Paulsen added.

WAPA staff across multiple functional organizations remained committed to continuous customer engagement throughout the process to ensure customers' needs were met.

"Going through the implementation process and getting to this point took a lot of hard work, dedication and determination from a lot of people," said Senior Vice President and DSW Regional Manager **Jack Murray** in an email to staff. "This effort truly is a region-wide, and, in many ways, a WAPA-wide success, with significant contributions by every functional area."

A diverse energy portfolio

Two other new participants joined the CAISO WEIM, expanding the market's footprint in the Southwest: El Paso Electric in Texas and AVANGRID, a major natural gas, solar and wind energy company. When combined with DSW's WALC BA, the WEIM now represents nearly 80% of the demand for electric power in the Western Interconnection.

The new participants further diversify the WEIM's resources with WAPA's federal hydropower and transmission services, EPE's regional generation, transmission and distribution in western Texas and southern New Mexico, and AVANGRID's renewable energy fleet in the region.

"Because of their varied resources and location, these new WEIM partners further strengthen regional collaboration and coordination in the West," CAISO's president and CEO Elliot Mainzer said in a statement. "It's been a pleasure to work with them in support of their effort to achieve enhanced operational efficiencies while providing cost savings to their customers."

Launched in 2014, WEIM's large footprint and centrally coordinated marketplace provides reliability and environmental benefits. It creates efficiencies by locating, marketing and delivering energy to its members in real-time at the lowest cost available. Instead of shutting down wind and solar farms in times of oversupply, the market's transmission providers move their low-cost renewable energy over greater distances – farther than traditional, bilateral trading partners could – to where it's needed most.

Joining the WEIM enhances DSW's real-time trading opportunities, provides efficient and affordable operations, and addresses BA limitations and constraints due to the loss of bilateral

trading partners in an era of deregulated markets.

WAPA and its customers stand to benefit financially from the arrangement. According to CAISO, WEIM yielded \$1 billion in benefits in 2022, increasing the total benefits since inception to more than \$3.4 billion as new entities join up.

Laying the groundwork

In 2021, DSW signed an implementation agreement with CASIO to participate in the market starting in 2023. The decision emerged after nearly two years of analysis and collaboration with customers on the best path forward to manage real-time mismatches between supply and demand within the WALC BA.

"Joining the EIM will support DSW's ability to economically market and dispatch energy on a timely basis and meet the needs of our customers," WAPA Administrator and CEO **Tracey A. LeBeau** said at the time. "We look forward to working with the ISO and our partner utilities to implement the EIM in our balancing authority and take advantage of the many resources and flexibilities the EIM offers."

On Nov. 3, 2022, DSW filed its adjusted Open Access Transmission Tariff with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. Prior to going live, DSW began parallel operations on Feb. 2 in preparation for the region's transition into WEIM. Parallel operations and the minor rate adjustment process for WEIM participation were both completed shortly before going live.

Strategically powering forward into markets

This effort directly connects to WAPA's strategic plan *Power Forward 2030*. Specifically, it supports the plan's topline goal to "Modernize the Grid" and bolsters the strategic objective



Power System Dispatcher *Stacy Russ* and Daniel Cox from Utilicast worked into the early morning hours during DSW's go-live into WEIM on April 5. The move is already realizing financial benefits for WAPA and its customers.

of "Prepare and adapt to a changing energy landscape."

To stay competitive, WAPA continues to evolve with the broader energy ecosystem around it. Evaluating and selecting markets that make the most sense for each region and its customers represents a big part of that adaptation process.

Joining WEIM, in addition to WAPA's other region-specific explorations of new market proposals, also fits well within *Power Forward 2030's* Resource Stewardship perspective. The two strategic objectives of "Optimize investments in system reliability" and "Improve cost efficiency" reflect the overall aims of WEIM for its members as a whole and WAPA's reasons for participating in the marketplace.

"For DSW, our ongoing market analysis is calibrated by our customers' and neighbors' activity," said Paulsen. "We are in a good position to continue to look for opportunities as the market landscape evolves in the Southwest."

Weighing market options

WAPA is also evaluating two different day-ahead market proposals that could lead to further cost savings.

On April 11, DSW executed an agreement with the Southwest Power

Pool to participate in Phase One of their Markets+ development, its proposed day-ahead market.

"DSW exploring Markets+ will give us critical insights and understanding of the complexities of the proposed market as it develops," said Vice President of Enterprise Portfolio Management Chrystal Dean. "Being at the table for these evaluations will help WAPA identify the best paths forward that protect the value of hydropower and transmission services for our customers."

The entities exploring the Markets+ initiative are expected to commit \$9.7 million collectively over 21 months to develop market protocols, tariff language and governing documents.

Subject to FERC approval, SPP targets its Markets+ launch for 2026.

DSW is also actively monitoring the CAISO's day-ahead market proposal dubbed the Extended Day-Ahead Market, an initiative that was jointly approved in February by the CAISO Board of Governors and the WEIM Governing Body, to better understand which day-ahead market construct will best serve DSW and its customers.

CAISO says the EDAM will benefit existing WEIM partners, which will have the opportunity to participate in the day-ahead market, where most energy transactions occur. Subject to FERC approval, CAISO expects its EDAM market to go live in 2024.

WAPA remains committed to fully analyzing, exploring and understanding these evolving market opportunities to make the best decisions based on WAPA's core statutory mission, regional circumstances and customer needs.

More information on DSW's effort is available at wapa.gov, About, Regions, DSW, DSW Energy Imbalance Market Activities. For more information on SPP's day-ahead market design, visit the SPP Markets+ webpage.

Revitalizing Estes-to-Flatiron infrastructure

By John Rohrer
Photos by Alex Stephens

KOMATSU

o modernize its aging power infrastructure, WAPA is embarking on a transformative project that will replace a pair of

high voltage transmission lines that have served hydroelectric generation plants and Colorado's historic town of Estes Park for nearly 100 years. The decision to replace these lines comes after years of proactive maintenance and observation by WAPA and the Bureau of Reclamation, highlighting the need for improved safety, reliability and reduced fire potential.

Construction crews work to replace aging wood structures with steel poles to modernize the system and reduce fire risk.

In 1938, Reclamation constructed the Estes-to-Lyons 115-kilovolt transmission line. Its primary purpose was to provide power for the ambitious Colorado-Big Thompson, or C-BT, facilities project, which aimed to collect water from the Western Slope and upper reaches of the Colorado River and distribute it throughout the state's Front Range communities. This ambitious endeavor sought to address the water needs of the growing population centers on the plains, which then, as they do now, accounted for 80% of Colorado's inhabitants.

Currents of change

As the C-BT project progressed, completing the 13-mile-long Alva B. Adams Tunnel in 1947 marked a significant milestone. This tunnel facilitated the passage of water from west of the Continental Divide to the east slope, harnessing the potential energy and converting it into electrical energy through hydroelectric generators along the water's flow path. To support this hydroelectric generation and provide power to Estes Park and surrounding areas, the Estes-to-Pole Hill and Pole Hill-to-Flatiron 115-kV transmission segments were added in 1953 with the addition of the Pole Hill Powerplant, completing the two parallel 15-mile transmission lines between Estes Park and Loveland.

However, the original wooden H-frame transmission line structures, which were expected to have a lifespan of 40 years, defied expectations due to proactive maintenance techniques and the dry climate of the Northern Colorado mountains. These transmission lines and structures continued to operate well beyond their expected lifespan, but in recent years the need for a comprehensive upgrade became evident.

Greg Johnson, an electrical engineer from the Rocky Mountain region, who has been the Estes-Flatiron project manager since 2014, emphasized the safety aspect of the project.

"Double circuit steel poles greatly reduce the amount of maintenance required compared to 80-year-old wood pole structures," Johnson said.

He further highlighted the benefits of consolidating the two rights-of-way onto a single one, reducing the mainte-



A crew places a concrete pad foundation to anchor a new steel pole structure, located along U.S. Route 36 on Crocker Ranch below the Estes Park sign.

nance distance by half and improving vegetation management strategies to ensure reliability, safety and reduced fire risk.

Infrastructure modernization for a resilient future

The decision to replace the aging wood structures with modern steel poles was driven by the need to conform to North American Electric Reliability Corporation reliability standards and minimize the risk of wildfires.

Johnson explained, "Wildfire has two components: the risk of the transmission line initiating a fire and risk to the transmission line from fire. The combination of old wood-pole transmission lines, reactive vegetation management practices and narrow ROW increase vulnerability to wildfire."

"Alternatives that utilize steel pole structures, wider ROW and active vegetation management greatly reduce the risk of damage from wildfires and the risk of initiating wildfires," he added.

The Estes-Flatiron Transmission Line Rebuild Project, initiated in 2009, focuses on replacing the aging wood-pole lines that were increasingly at risk of failure. The project aims to reduce the maintenance burden, resolve access difficulties and lower lifecycle costs. It involved extensive public outreach and engagement, with scoping meetings and a public comment period to ensure transparency and gather community input.

Standardizing the conductor size, collaborating on fiber-optic communications infrastructure and prioritizing long-term maintenance costs were crucial steps in ensuring a reliable power supply and meeting the region's evolving needs. While the original infrastructure had served Estes Park community and Reclamation generation well, the criticality of electrical supply, loads and fiber communications had increased exponentially in the past 80 years, necessitating the upgrade.

The project, which covers federal, state and private lands, is currently 60% complete and should be in service by the end of the year. Ultimately, aging and deteriorating transmission lines will be replaced, reducing potential disruption for customers due to wildfire hazards, improving access for maintenance and emergencies, and ensuring that the transmission lines comply with applicable codes and requirements.

Note: The author is a public affairs specialist.

Celebrating AANTEP Literitage IVIonth

By John Rohrer

ach May, WAPA observes Asian
American, Native Hawaiian and
Pacific Islander Heritage Month,
which recognizes our AANHPI
communities and celebrates their
diverse cultures and contributions
in the United States. The term
AANHPI comprises 23 million

Americans and includes roughly 50 ethnic groups with roots in more than 40 countries.

WAPA Special Emphasis Program Manager **Mark Mangione**, presented a virtual meeting in honor of AANHPI
Heritage Month and invited WAPA's employees to join.

"The Special Emphasis Program furthers WAPA's mission to understand our customers, and what makes our employees tick," said Mangione. "Through the promotion of inclusivity, through awareness and education, it helps us appreciate, value, understand and celebrate our social and cultural similarities and differences."

The May 9 meeting was the first in a series of awareness broadcasts that the Special Emphasis Program plans to deliver. The program showcased two WAPA employees and one special guest who discussed their experiences in the workforce and their homelife over the years.

WAPA Senior Contract Specialist **John Pratt**, from the Rocky Mountain region, is native Taiwanese with other Pacific Island ancestry. He identifies as Taiwanese and Pacific Islander.

"I often get labeled as being Chinese, but my ancestry is aboriginal Taiwanese, which is different than the Chinese

that emigrated from mainland China," said Pratt. "While we celebrate some of the same traditions, being Taiwanese has its own unique island culture, language and food. For example, native Taiwanese people speak Taiwanese Hokkien versus Mandarin."

Before the term "Asian American" became the norm, people of Asian ancestry were often referred to as "Oriental."

"Some of the older generations here in the U.S. still used the term, which can be misconstrued and somewhat offensive," Pratt continued. "I've always been confused by that term being Taiwanese and Pacific Islander; it was hard for me to identify with that labeling, much less understand the meaning of being 'Oriental."

From roots to a tapestry of cultures Pratt's family immigrated to the United States before he entered grade school age. As a boy, he avoided associating himself primarily with Asian cultural groups.

"Most of my friends were from diverse ethnic groups, such as Mexican Americans, African Americans and



Caucasians. I've always integrated myself with diverse ethnic groups and mainstream America," he said. "Even going to school in Hawaii, with its vast Eastern and Western influences, I've always assimilated myself into the big melting pot of cultures versus limiting myself and associating with primarily the Asian community."

Another WAPA panelist, Sierra Nevada Management and Program Analyst **Zia Islam**, is a Bangladeshi American who came to the United States in his early 20s to complete his graduate studies in civil engineering.

"Terms like AANHPI, I've only heard recently, but it's good because it means progress," Islam said. "There are some misconceptions out there about people from South Asia, but I'm glad that we're heading in the right direction because of programs like this that bring attention to this group of people."

Islam also encouraged people to find commonality, rather than differences. A sentiment shared by others on the program.

Rounding out the panel was Indra Raj, director at KGNU Radio in Boulder, Colorado, and the host of a podcast called Family Karma Kast.

"I think that sometimes there can be assumptions and comments made that can be microaggressions, which can be kind of difficult to deal with," said Raj. "I've had them come up in general and at work."

She used the example of a white person coming up to her and starting to speak Hindi, when she doesn't speak Hindi.

"Or if I walk into a Yoga studio and everyone expects me to be an expert just because of the way I look," Raj said. "These things stack up and remind me that I'm not the dominant group here, and that I stick out in ways that I don't want to, and that's when the microaggressions start to affect a person of color in an adverse way."

AANHPI Heritage Month provides an opportunity to foster an inclusive work environment that appreciates and values the richness of different cultural backgrounds.

"When I was growing up, I wanted to hide the fact of where I was from," Raj continued. "But now I want to embrace that part of my heritage, share it with other people and make them excited about it. We live in a different world now, and I feel like this conversation that we're having today we weren't having five years ago, and I hope we keep moving forward as a society."

Recognizing AANHPIs with presidential support

A White House statement on AANHPI Heritage Month remarked, "There is no single story of the AANHPI experience, but rather a diversity of contributions that enrich America's culture and society and strengthen the United States' role as a global leader. The American story as we know it would be impossible without the strength, contributions, and legacies of AANHPIs who have helped build and unite this country in each successive generation."

By recognizing AANHPI Heritage Month, workplaces can raise awareness about the challenges, experiences and achievements of AAPI individuals. This promotes understanding, empathy and respect among colleagues, fostering a more inclusive and harmonious workplace.

Furthermore, recognizing heritage months can attract and retain a diverse talent pool by showcasing an organization's commitment to inclusivity. It can create a more welcoming environment for all professionals, helping to build a diverse and multicultural workforce.

Note: The author is a public affairs specialist.

For more information regarding AANHPI month or other Special Emphasis Programs, visit *myWAPA*, Departments, Economic Impact & Diversity, Special Emphasis Programs.





IT leader earns Secretary's Achievement Award

By Leah Shapiro

n January, Cybersecurity
Advisor Jim Ball was
recognized with a Secretary
of Energy Achievement
Award for his participation
on the Clean Energy
Corps' Core Competency
Interview Team.



When asked about his participation on the team, Ball offered, "I really enjoyed interviewing such a wide range of candidates for these exciting opportunities. I spoke to experienced nuclear engineers, administrative assistants and interns just

beginning their professional journeys."

"It was gratifying to see such interest in these [Bipartisan Infrastructure Law] opportunities," he added.

The following information was presented in the award ceremony program:

"These awards ... are bestowed on a select group of individuals who have gone above and beyond and whose creativity, drive and commitment have significant and lasting impact," shared Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm. "DOE is home to a dedicated and diverse team of world-class scientists, engineers, policy experts, and mission support personnel at headquarters, field sites and laboratories across the Nation. Their work—deploying clean energy technology, promoting scientific discovery, maintaining the

nuclear deterrent, and remediating environmental harms—has never

been more important."

[A Secretary of Energy Achievement Award is presented] in recognition of the Clean Energy Corps Core Competency Interview Team for their extraordinary dedication to implement the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. BIL provides more than \$62 billion

for the Department of Energy to deliver a more equitable clean energy future. It is the biggest investment in DOE's history, and it significantly expands DOE's work scope associated with the President's plan to build a modern, sustainable clean energy future.

DOE was charged with filling about 750 federal positions in the Clean Energy Corps in support of BIL execution. To fill these critical positions, DOE developed an innovative recruitment and hiring strategy built upon core principles of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility to ensure the Clean Energy Corps represents the full diversity of the American public while treating all candidates equitably.

Core to this strategy was the integration of CCIs, a first of its kind of approach to candidate evaluations. The CCIs assessed a candidate's capabilities and skills using questions designed around three researched-based attributes that highly correlate to a person's success in a role: conscientiousness, partnering and humility/learning orientation.

A team of volunteers from across DOE came together to support this critical Departmental initiative, completing more than 2,000

> initial interviews within a few short months to help meet this critical recruitment

initiative. The Team enabled DOE to meet its milestones in attracting the most diverse, highly qualified candidate pool possible, while ensuring a fair and equitable candidate evaluation process. The team's dedication to our clean energy mission and their willingness to give their time while continuing to meet their day-to-day responsibilities is a true example of DOE's values.

For their contributions to the Department of Energy and the Nation, the Clean Energy Corps Core Competency Interview Team is awarded the Secretary of Energy Achievement Award.

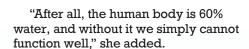
Note: The author is a management and program analyst.

Hydration challenge sparks health awakening

By John Rohrer

hile water is a vital component of WAPA's success, it's also vitally important to the survival of each of us. That's why in 2022,

Colorado River Storage Project Management Center Executive Assistant Sharon Brown, who is an Inclusion, Diversity and Advisory Committee co-coordinator, decided to create a challenge to her coworkers to increase the amount of water they drink daily.



The idea was a simple one: motivate people to the benefits of better health by ensuring they had adequate amounts of water in their daily routines and raise awareness about the IDAC.

So, she created the Hydration Challenge.

"As humans, we all have the same basic needs," said Brown. "No matter your gender, religion, nationality or skin color, there is one force that drives every one of us, and that is our health. Our thought process was, 'If April showers bring May flowers, and since we market power made from water, why not celebrate hydro with a hydration challenge?"

Ripples of expanding hydration

The Hydration Challenge started out as an internal challenge with 14 people creating seven teams at CRSP MC. The teams competed against each other for one full month and invited people from the Desert Southwest region to compete with them and had a total of 34 people participate in all.

"The DSW IDAC accepted our challenge with open water bottles," Brown said. "Throughout the challenge, we sent out more fun facts to help keep

everyone focused on what was really important... WINNING! Just kidding. The focus was on health and how our bodies will feel so much better when we are properly hydrated."

DSW Management and Program Analyst Tatiana Young was a point person for this challenge from the DSW IDAC side. "It was a very interesting challenge because it promotes your health," she said. "I noticed that during the four-week challenge I had to push myself to drink more water than I normally do. Typically, I would never forget to get a cup of coffee but often I forget to hydrate myself. I started to feel much better while focusing

"This challenge has created a habit for me to drink approximately 16 fluid ounces first thing in the morning getting me off to a great start. I have also found this practice helps me limit my daily coffee to just one cup!"

CRSP MC Administrative and Technical Services Manager Brian Sadler

"The hydration challenge was a great opportunity to promote inclusion and diversity between the two regions by having friendly competition. Even though we lost, it was a great way for us to pull together and meet the challenge to keep hydrated."

DSW Engineering and Construction Manager Teresita Amaro

"I greatly appreciated the hydration challenge which increased my awareness of drinking more water, especially since I live in the desert. It would be great to see a longer challenge or multiple challenges a year!"

DSW Public Utilities Specialist James Lambert

"Aside from the hydration challenge being a great opportunity to promote inclusion & diversity between the two regions by having friendly competition. I can see the difference in my food intake as well as the weight lost. I feel more energized, and my skin shows the difference as a result of my water consumption."

DSW Realty Specialist and IDAC Member Mark Grinage

"The CRSP Inclusion and Diversity Committee does a great job of bringing us together. At our 'What's Hot' meetings, they present on topics like the Chinese New Year presentation, which turned into goal setting for personal growth. No matter the topic, our IDC promotes our commonalities and team cohesiveness. I love being part of the CRSP team, where we all work to bring out the best in each other!"

CRSP MC Financial Manager Jennifer Hultsch

on hydrating myself, and exercising more, as well as removing caffeine from daily usage!"

Part of the motivation behind this was because at the end of the day, no matter who you are, where you come from, what you believe in, or where you are in life, you only have one body. So why not take care of it?

Financial Program Analyst **Alex Lindstrom** noted, "I've always been a big water drinker for the last few years, so this wasn't new for me."

"But what was fun for me was actually tracking it and feeling accomplished when I turned in my ounces for the week," Lindstrom said. "This provided me motivation to be more diligent with other aspects of my health."

Nourishing life, one sip at a time

Though the challenge, Brown and her team brought awareness to people who did not realize they were not hydrating properly.

"For me personally, I only used to drink 24 ounces of water in a day," said Brown. "I had constant headaches and wondered why I felt lethargic by the end of the day. As I gradually increased my water intake to my new average of 70 ounces per day, I noticed an astounding difference. I had more energy, my skin looked better, my joints didn't hurt as much, and I just felt amazing!"

"Others have said they have found a new love of water," Brown added. "All in all, this challenge has been such a success story."

Brown and her team hope other regions will participate in the 2024 Hydration Challenge. \Box

Note: The author is a public affairs specialist.

Several significant benefits of hydrating properly:

Increase energy levels:

Water increases our red blood cell counts and increases the oxygen we receive to our brain. The increase in oxygen will create more alertness and energy so you can start your morning off right. Beginning the day with water instead of coffee or tea, you are also saving your stomach from acid build up or reflux. It is recommended to drink water before having food and coffee.

Boost metabolism:

For some, weight loss can be a very slow and daunting process. By boosting your metabolic rate, you are increasing the rate at which calories are burned. According to WebMD.com, after drinking 17 ounces of water, men and women saw an increase of approximately 30% to their metabolism. Water also makes you feel full and can remove the by-products of fat cells.

Help ease aches and pains:

Drinking water helps to lubricate and cushion joints. Drinking enough water daily can also help to remove acid wastes that can

build up in the body. Drinking water in the morning can help with back pain, joint pain and even arthritis, so you feel better throughout the day. Water also helps with chronic headaches. Often, headaches are caused by unintentional dehydration. It can also be because of electrolyte imbalance. By drinking the appropriate amount of water, you can help balance out your fluids and aide in easing headaches and other pains.

Clearer complexion and more radiant skin:

Drinking water on an empty stomach will help retain the elasticity of your skin and prevent wrinkles. It also hydrates skin, so it looks brighter, softer and more radiant throughout the day.

Fight toxins:

Drinking water can help flush out harmful toxins in your body. When you urinate and sweat, you are ridding the body of toxins that build up in your system. Water also cleanses out the colon, which makes nutrient absorption easier, and helps the kidneys in producing hormones, absorbing minerals, filtering blood and producing urine.

Safety Corner



The value of safety committees

By Paul Robbins



afety committees are an integral part of WAPA safety culture. Do you know what they do and why they are so important? WAPA has five primary safety and health committees: one for each region and another at Headquarters. Each committee is made up of an equal number of management and non-management members, in addition to union representatives. Typically, committee representatives serve for a two-year period.

Committees also have non-voting members such as Safety and Occupational Health and Office of Security and Emergency Management representatives. These members serve the committee in a collaborative and advisory capacity by providing technical guidance as impartial participants. This includes advising the committee on various of topics including WAPA and industry incident

trends, safety and health programs, facility inspections and emergency planning.

Each committee has a separate charter that defines the organization and its specific duties. The main duty of these safety committees is to evaluate safety and health issues in their respective areas and recommend solutions. They achieve this by meeting regularly and discussing safety and health issues affecting employees. This includes reviewing employee complaints of unsafe or unhealthful conditions and recommending corrective actions. It also includes a review of WAPA Judgement of Needs documents resulting from past Incident Reports to confirm that documented Corrective Action Plans are being addressed and followed.

Sometimes committees work together to address WAPA-wide issues. Below is an example of regional committees working together to improve the WAPA Safety Incentive Program.

Committee case study

This year marks the five-year anniversary of an important meeting at Headquarters that included regional safety committee members and other participants. The working group was tasked with evaluating and improving the Safety Incentive Program in response to a Department of Energy audit that identified several regional differences in program practices.

The goal of the meeting was to build on the current program's strengths while also resolving regional differences to create a stronger, more consistent and equitable program. In addition to other improvement goals, one main objective was to establish a simple process that measured and recorded safety program participation and success through minimal time and effort.

The group accomplished this by addressing regional program inconsistencies by comparing program criteria and awards, cross-regional reporting issues and unclear eligibility requirements. Then they suggested solutions to these challenges.

Safety committee success

As a result of the working group meeting, a structured Safety Incentive Recognition System was developed with a few participation steps and established deadlines. A two-page certification worksheet was also developed with six safety, health and wellness categories and specific activities that could be achieved for points toward program awards. Both are currently used WAPA-wide and enable employees to follow a set process, measure performance effectively and submit results in a timely manner.

This did not end the committee process. Each year the group meets to reevaluate the program and revise the process based on their assessment and employee suggestions. These annual updates have included improved communication, development of electronic forms and a streamlined submittal process through a centralized awards SharePoint site managed by the Human Resources Shared Service Center. New performance and award categories have also been added to open other opportunities.

Safety committees are a critical part of keeping WAPA employees safe on a local and organizational basis. They also can use input and participation from you. Contact your regional committee and see how you can help improve safety at WAPA.

Note: Robbins is a technical writer who works under the Cherokee Nation Strategic Programs contract.

For more information, visit: myWAPA, Departments, Human Resources, Awards, Safety Incentive Program.



Safety Incentive Program deadline: June 30

Don't forget that the deadline for submission of the required Employee Safety Incentive Program Certification Form is June 30.

The Safety Incentive Program is an employee-driven initiative sponsored by the Human Resources Shared Service Center and supported by regional and Headquarters safety committees. It promotes integrated safety practices, continuous safety improvement and a healthy workforce.

Employees earn points toward the program for their participation in a wide variety of safety practices related to these five categories:

- Preventing sprains, strains and bodily injury
- Safe vehicle operation
- Health and wellness
- Safety participation
- Facility safety

All federal employees actively employed at WAPA by June 30 of the previous year are eligible for the program. Participating employees can earn up to 20 hours of paid time off and up to \$300. Participation also contributes to a safer and healthier lifestyle and workplace.

Almost 1,000 employees took part during 2022.



Making PDF forms accessible

By Angie Harsh

APA's Section 508 team provides tips and tricks to help employees ensure their documents and web content are compliant and accessible for those with disabilities. Remember: Before any content can be made public, it must comply with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act.

June tips:

WAPA employees widely use PDF forms for various activities, from submitting applications to accessing vital information. Making these forms accessible empowers individuals with disabilities to interact independently with these documents, underlining the significance of Section 508.

Accessible PDFs offer an enhanced user experience, providing compatibility with assistive technologies like screen readers. They also help maintain regulatory compliance, safeguarding organizations from potential legal complications associated with noncompliance. Furthermore, 508 compliant PDFs ensure a broader reach, enabling a wider audience to access your content.

Tips for creating accessible PDF forms:

- Alt text for visuals: Always add alternative text to images, charts and other visuals.
 This ensures screen readers can relay the information to users who are visually impaired.
- Logical reading order: Ensure the document's content is organized in a logical order, allowing screen readers to convey the information in the way it was intended.
- Clear and simple language: Use simple, clear language to ensure the content is easily understood. Avoid complex phrases and jargon.
- Accessible form fields: When creating interactive forms, ensure form fields are tagged correctly and can be easily navigated using a keyboard.
- Color contrast and font size: Ensure adequate contrast between text and background colors.
 Also, use a font size that is easily readable.
- Document properties: Set the document language in the document properties.
 This helps screen readers use the correct pronunciation rules.

Note: The author is a public affairs specialist.

For resources to help you create, test and remedy the content you share online, visit *myWAPA*, **Departments**, **Public Affairs**, **Learn about Section 508**. If you still have questions, contact **section 508**@wapa.gov



Rapid Recaps



IT prioritizes becoming students of the business

pril 18-20, Information Technology's Power Management and Marketing Team met in person, for the first time, at WAPA's Electric Power Training Center in Golden, Colorado.

"Each member of our team supports a specific power marketing-related application for a region or two," said Vice President of IT – Power Management and Marketing **Brett Fisher**. "We wanted to bring them together to show them the big picture of how it all fits together ... how their work directly supports WAPA's mission."

Supervisory IT Specialists **Gerald Bustamante** and **Mark Phelps** shared similar sentiments and added that they wanted to incorporate team building elements into the agenda.

They kicked off with overviews of WAPA, electricity and Operations. The rest of the agenda was dedicated to a deep dive on the Power Marketing function. On the final day, staff gave presentations on the applications they support. The team also toured the EPTC's Miniature Power System.

The PMMT serves as the technology point of contact to deliver and provide quality products and services to WAPA's Power Marketing and



Electric Power Training Center Power System Dispatcher/Trainer *Timothy Slater* provides a tour of the EPTC's Miniature Power System on April 20.

Energy Marketing and Management offices. Specifically, they:

- Support commercial, off-the-shelf applications and system integration for software.
- Develop distributed applications and systems when commercial, off-the-shelf products and services do not exist or are not affordable.
- Identify opportunities to develop innovative tools and services to improve business processes and reduce the overall cost of delivering business solutions.

Brief Transmissions

Employee Assistance Program

The Department of Energy truly cares about the well-being of its employees and recognizes the importance of providing support services. To ensure comprehensive assistance, DOE has partnered with Federal Occupational Health services to exclusively offer Employee Assistance Program services and work-life offerings.

Beginning April 1, employees can access the various benefits and services through FOH. If you were receiving benefits or services from Espÿr, you can now transition to FOH by using the provided links for comparable or expanded services. Even if you had previously exhausted your allotment of services with Espÿr, you may still be eligible for similar services through FOH.

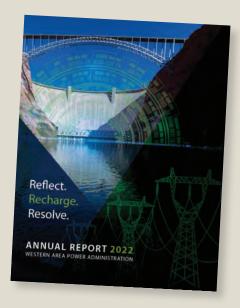
FOH provides a range of services through FOH4You, including EAP counseling services, tele-based confidential counseling, referral services and informational webinars. These resources are designed to assist you and your family in managing everyday personal or work-related challenges.

Additionally, DOE federal employees have access to FOH's WorkLife4You services. These services offer expert guidance, personalized referrals and online tools to support various aspects of life, such as childcare, adult care, education, career development, financial and legal matters, as well as health and wellness.

Participation in FOH4You and WorkLife4You is completely confidential and free of charge.

For more information, visit myWAPA, Departments, Human Resources, Employee Information, Employee Assistance Program.





FY 2022 Annual Report available

APA's fiscal year 2022 Annual Report, *Reflect. Recharge. Resolve.*, is now available. WAPA worked with its partners to develop a new strategic plan and made progress in markets, among many other shared achievements. The annual report focuses on just a few of WAPA's many accomplishments in FY 2022.

"Facing great opportunities as well as operational challenges, WAPA continued to deliver on mission yet still look ahead to prepare for and embrace transformational industry change," said Administrator and CEO **Tracey A. LeBeau** in her opening letter.

Find the report at WAPA.gov, About, The Source, Annual Reports.



Microsoft visit explores future, innovation

APA's Information Technology Senior Leadership Team attended an Executive Briefing at Microsoft Headquarters, April 4-5, in Redmond, Washington.

The visit aimed to explore innovative solutions and maximize WAPA's current investments in Microsoft products. The team attended specialized sessions on the future of O365 and Teams, Microsoft Viva, Power Apps, Power Automate and Power Bl. They also attended briefings on identity and access management, cloud computing and industry use cases of artificial intelligence and machine learning.



Team stops for a photo at the Microsoft sign during a two-day executive briefing at Microsoft Headquarters in Redmond, Washington.